United Nations S/PV.7507

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7507th meeting

Wednesday, 19 August 2015, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Casimiro
	Chad	Mr. Gombo
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Ms. Yang Yi
	France	Mr. Stehelin
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council. Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

15-26001 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: Today marks World Humanitarian Day, commemorating the 19 August 2003 terrorist attack on the Canal Hotel, which served as the United Nations compound in Baghdad. The attack killed 22 people and injured over 100, most of whom were working tirelessly on the humanitarian relief effort in Iraq.

Sadly, in the years since then, the number of people attacked while delivering life-saving assistance continues to rise. Ten humanitarian workers were killed in every month of 2014. In Syria, 77 humanitarians have lost their lives since the beginning of the conflict. In Yemen, five aid workers have been killed, others have been injured and another two were kidnapped this year. Over the past 10 years in Yemen, 17 humanitarian workers have died in the line of duty and 44 have been kidnapped. The contexts in which humanitarian workers serve around the world and the terrible plight of the more than 100 million people in need of humanitarian assistance they seek to reach continue to deteriorate.

I have just returned from Yemen, where the scale of human suffering is almost incomprehensible. I was shocked by what I saw. The civilian population is bearing the brunt of the conflict — a shocking four out of five Yemenis require humanitarian assistance and nearly 1.5 million people are internally displaced. More than 1,000 children have been killed or injured, and the number of young people recruited or used as fighters is increasing. As I highlighted in my 28 July briefing on Yemen (see S/PV.7493), the needs of the people are massive. That is exacerbated by impediments to commercial imports, resulting in widespread scarcity of food and fuel. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot meet all the needs of an entire country with a population of 26 million people. That is why airports and seaports need to remain open and be used for both commercial imports and humanitarian supplies without restriction.

Disregard for human life on the part of all parties continues, with attacks on residential areas and civilian infrastructure having a disproportionate impact on the lives of ordinary people in Yemen. Reports of air strikes and other shelling in and around the port of Al-Hudaydah earlier this week damaged the main lifelines for the import of basic goods: food, medicines and fuel. Those attacks are in clear contravention of international humanitarian law and are unacceptable. I am extremely concerned that the damage to the port of Al-Hudaydah could have a severe impact on the entire country and will deepen humanitarian needs, making more people food insecure and leaving them without access to water or medicines, which could also mean the spread of disease.

The parties to the conflict must ensure that humanitarian aid is facilitated and not hindered. All parties to the conflict must respect and implement international humanitarian law; possible violations must be investigated and perpetrators held accountable. I have seen the anguish of the Yemeni people with my own eyes — men, women and children alike, unsure where their next meal will come from or if they will ever be able to return to their homes.

In Sana'a, I witnessed queues for fuel that were kilometres long, and people waiting for several days to meet the basic needs of their families. I visited Al-Thawra hospital, where the lights flickered as the generators ran low on fuel, patients lay on the floor and cardboard was used as mattresses. There I saw a young man injured by shrapnel. He said he had been a soldier since he was 15 years of age. I saw a young woman who was grazed by a bullet across her face while sitting in her own home, and I saw a young Somali man with tuberculosis. The hospital has run out of examination gloves and has insufficient quantities of essential medicines because the supplier in Dubai is unable to fly their cold-chain aircraft to Sana'a. Hospital staff informed me that the blood bank recently closed due to a shortage of laboratory reagents used for screening.

In Faj Attan, a neighbourhood in Sana'a, I saw homes destroyed by air strikes; neighbours told me of the numerous civilian deaths and injuries. In Aden, an entire road of homes and businesses were destroyed

by street battles and air strikes, which left the streets littered with tanks and unexploded ordnance. I heard the story of a father and daughter who had been killed just days earlier by an improvised explosive device. The Governor of Aden informed me that some people were slowly returning to their homes and basic services were being restored, but not in vast swathes of the city, where unexploded ordnance litter the streets and buildings. People are overwhelmed by the scale of the destruction and the task ahead in rebuilding their shattered city. Electricity, essential for water-pumping and cereal-milling, is rare and intermittent.

It is appropriate on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day to reflect on the courage of my colleagues — Yemeni and international — who continue to deliver vital assistance despite the tremendous operational challenges, often risking their own lives to help others. Since the conflict began in late March, nearly 7 million people in Yemen have been supported by United Nations agencies and their partners with food, water, shelter, health support and protection assistance. I am humbled by the tireless efforts of my colleagues.

But much more needs to be done. We continue to scale up the humanitarian response so that we can reach all those in need with the assistance they so sorely need. That includes positioning more international staff across the country, outside of Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah. We aim to establish operational hubs in Aden, Ibb, Sa'ada and Al-Mukalla as soon as the security situation allows.

The success of our efforts to continue to assist the people depends on our having sufficient resources to respond. Today, the World Food Programme warned again that a lack of immediate and unhindered access to people who urgently need food assistance and the shortage of funding create the possibility of famine for millions of Yemenis. To date, only 18 per cent — some $282 million of the $1.6 billion requested through the Yemen humanitarian response plan — has been received. United Nations agencies have still not received the funding from Saudi Arabia of $274 million pledged in April. Even once those funds are received, the response plan will be funded at only 33 per cent. Substantial additional resources will be needed to support the Yemeni people through the rest of the year and beyond.

Throughout my mission, I emphasized that peace is essential to ending the tremendous suffering of the people. There is no military solution to this conflict. Peace must be reached through a dialogue of words, not a dialogue of weapons. We, the international community, must match our actions with our words and take immediate measures to end the violence that is destroying the lives of millions of people across the country. We must get the parties to stop the fighting and return to the negotiating table before it is too late. Otherwise, there will be nothing left to fight for.

As we reflect on the state of play globally on World Humanitarian Day, we unfortunately see a worsening situation and a scale of needless humanitarian suffering that is truly shocking. We must act. We must do more to ensure that those of us in a position to do so prevent the abuses perpetrated against those who can do nothing, and that those who continue to carry them out are held to account.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.15 p.m.